

## Solidarity Singers

### Group Re-creation and Expansion

*\$2,500 Grant from the Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund - April 2015*

The Solidarity Singers, sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, are a group of singers and musicians who perform and lead others in singing folk songs and peace songs to enhance community events. They perform for free and like to choose songs that are relevant to the issue of the group they are singing for, continuing in the long tradition of the use of folk music in struggles for social justice. They use old folk songs and create or commandeer new ones that speak to issues of social, environmental and economic justice going on in our community and in the world. They believe that when people sing together they feel a strong sense of unity not otherwise possible.

In 2015 the group applied to the Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund for support.

"We began in the spring of 2013, so we are not technically 'new,'" wrote co-founders Betty Ball and Matt Nicodemus. "We are currently made up of about 8 members/singers and musicians, including a flutist, guitarists, a mandolin player, and percussionist (wash board, clave). But we recently have recognized that we are at a juncture and need to take concrete steps to 'recreate ourselves.' We are committed to growing in size, diversity and musically. A grant from the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund would greatly assist us by providing funding to hire a professional director, obtain regular rehearsal space, and to produce attractive, creative promotional materials to use in actively recruiting young people and people from a variety of cultures and ethnic groups." The group outlined its plans for accomplishing these objectives.

In June 2016 the co-founders wrote back to report that, over the past year, with the assistance of the Wilson Fund grant, the Solidarity Singers had:

- Brought on Debra Hammond, choir director at Boulder's Unitarian Universalist Church, as musical director. (Ms. Hammond is director of Music, Unitarian Universalist church of Boulder, a private voice teacher, and has extensive vocal performance and teaching credits.)
- Made 18 appearances at events ranging from peace concerts to church dinners to open-mic events to protest marches and rallies. "When local change-making organizations need musical support, they call the Solidarity Singers," Nicodemus wrote. "From the office of Congressman Polis to an MLK Day parade, to May Day at the Mercury Cafe with the IWW, the Solidarity Singers continue to enjoy a growing following. The group also opened for Old's Cool Rock at our April 2016 benefit dance."
- Added more than 20 new pieces to their repertoire, including both traditional songs and new compositions, including compositions by co-director Matt Nicodemus.
- Attracted some 6 new singers who have continued to sing with the group, as well as an additional 6 or 7 who participated for a short time.
- Made contacts with numerous community groups, both musical and activist.



Their new director, Debra Hammond, states, "It is my pleasure to be working with the Solidarity Singers as their musical director. The group's vision and dedication are inspiring and I look forward to helping them achieve their goals through building musical skills that will strengthen their individual and collective talents so that their message may be conveyed more passionately through music."

"Thank you, again, for awarding us this grant from the Alex 'Tink' Wilson Fund," wrote Betty Ball and Matt Nicodemus. "We hope you are pleased with our progress toward our goals."